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LETTER DATED 9 NOVEMBER 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to my letter to the President of the Security Council dated 10 September 1999 (S/1999/983), as well as to the letters from the President of the Council dated 16 September (S/1999/984) and 6 October 1999 addressed to me.

In my letter of 10 September, I informed the Security Council of my intention to appoint Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen to the newly established position of United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and my Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority.

On 16 September, I received a letter from the President of the Security Council noting my intention to appoint a new United Nations Special Coordinator, following which Mr. Larsen took up his functions on 1 October.

On 6 October, I received another letter from the President of the Council, welcoming the signing of the Sharm El-Sheikh Memorandum, and expressing the members belief that the new agreement opened the way for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace within a reasonable time-frame in the entire region based on all relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 and 338 (1973) of 22 October 1993. Members of the Council also expressed their determination to keep developments under review and to provide the necessary backing, giving full support to the agreements reached, as well as to the timely and speedy implementation of those agreements.

As members of the Council are aware, the Prime Minister of Israel and the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization met in Oslo on 1 and 2 November 1999, in a very positive spirit. It was agreed that Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams would start "final status" talks in Ramallah today, and that a deadline for a framework agreement would be set for 15 February 2000, prior to a final agreement to be reached by September 2000. The United Nations was represented at those meetings by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

With the various tracks of the Middle East peace process entering a new phase, the United Nations must ensure that it is in a position to respond

quickly and effectively to any requests from the parties as they make progress in their bilateral and multilateral negotiations. Based on the many discussions I have had with the parties and others concerned, it is my understanding that the existing areas of United Nations activity in the Middle East, from assistance to refugees and regional development activities to peacekeeping missions, as well as some additional areas of activity, are likely to be raised by the parties themselves in the forthcoming rounds of negotiations.

It was for this reason that I decided that the United Nations should establish a unified structure in the region, with a clearly recognized focal point for the Organization's contributions to the implementation of the peace agreements and with overall responsibility for making appropriate preparations, in consultation with the parties to the Madrid process and the wider international community, for enhancing United Nations assistance.

In establishing such a focal point on the ground, the United Nations will be in a better position to respond to requests for assistance, drawing on the substantive and operational expertise and advice of the United Nations system. This will enable the Organization to improve the effectiveness of its traditional activities in support of the Middle East peace process while preparing it to respond to requests for additional assistance, should this be agreed by all parties.

In this connection, and to enable the United Nations to respond to the peace-building challenges that lie ahead, I have asked the Special Coordinator to reconfigure the existing office based in Gaza, bearing in mind that he is likely to require additional resources.

I should be grateful if you could forward the present letter to the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN